

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 618

By Pody

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Reverend Billy Graham.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Reverend Billy Graham; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham was a renowned Christian evangelist whose worldwide crusades and role as advisor to decades of United States presidents made him one of the best known religious figures of his time; and

WHEREAS, William Franklin Graham, Jr., was born November 7, 1918, and raised on a dairy farm in Charlotte, North Carolina; he made a personal commitment to Christ at a revival meeting in his hometown when he was only fifteen years old; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham attended Bob Jones College and the Florida Bible Institute and was ordained a Southern Baptist clergyman in 1939; in 1943, he graduated from Wheaton College, where he met fellow student Ruth McCue Bell, the daughter of a medical missionary; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Graham and Ruth Bell married in August 1943 and had five children, nineteen grandchildren, and numerous great-grandchildren; they enjoyed sixty-four years of marriage until Mrs. Graham's passing in June 2007; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Billy Graham vaulted to national prominence with his 1948 Los Angeles, California, crusade; originally scheduled for three weeks, it was extended to eight weeks, an occurrence which became commonplace, as subsequent crusades in various cities around the globe also lasted far longer than scheduled; in New York, he ran nightly for four months at Madison Square Garden in 1957; and

WHEREAS, in 1950, Reverend Graham founded the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, until it was relocated to Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2003; and

WHEREAS, through the BGEA, he conducted his weekly *Hour of Decision* radio program, published *Decision* magazine, and produced television programs for Christian networks; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Billy Graham wrote thirty-three books over the course of his lifetime, including his autobiography, *Just As I Am*, and his most recent book, *Where I Am: Heaven, Eternity, and Our Life Beyond the Now*, published in 2015; and

WHEREAS, according to the BGEA, Reverend Graham's lifetime audience reached nearly 215 million individuals in over 185 countries and territories, with hundreds of millions more viewing him on television, video, film, and webcasts; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Graham's legacy includes consulting and praying with every U.S. president from Dwight Eisenhower to Barack Obama; he presided over the graveside services for President Lyndon Johnson in 1973 and spoke at the funeral of President Richard Nixon in 1994; and

WHEREAS, during important times in America's history, Billy Graham served as America's reverend, leading by example and serving as a beacon of hope; during the 1960s, he ardently opposed segregation, refusing to speak to segregated audiences, and on September 14, 2001, he led a national prayer service at Washington National Cathedral after the 9/11 attacks; and

WHEREAS, often duly honored for his good works, Reverend Graham was frequently recognized as one of the "Ten Most Admired Men in the World"; he and his wife were both awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1966; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Billy Graham remained active in the ministry well into his seventies, holding his last crusade in 2004; throughout his career, he remained true to his one purpose: to help people find a personal relationship with God through Christ; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Graham leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Reverend Billy Graham, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Reverend Graham.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.